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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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SUBJECT: UDF OBTAINS MAJORITY IN PARLIAMENT; MULUZI
INCREASES INFLUENCE OVER MUTHARIKA

SUMMARY

1. (SBU) With the June 18 announcement that the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and the ruling United Democratic Front (UDF) have formed an alliance, the UDF (owing primarily to Chairman Bakili Muluzi's political maneuvering) has successfully secured a majority in Parliament and overcome the opposition. As kingpin of the deals in the House, former President Muluzi has deepened his influence over President Bingu wa Mutharika while garnering support for Muluzi-loyalist Rodwell Munyenembe as Speaker. Scheduled to convene June 28, Parliament will elect a Speaker and Deputies before Mutharika officially opens the session on June 29.
END SUMMARY.

NDA AND UDF FORM AN ALLIANCE

2. (U) National Democratic Alliance (NDA) President Brown Mpinganjira and ruling United Democratic Front (UDF) party chairman Bakili Muluzi announced on June 18 at Muluzi's Blantyre residence that the two parties had agreed to form an alliance "for the sake of national unity." At the time of the announcement, no formal MOU had been signed, and a technical committee was reported to be working out the details. Mpinganjira said the NDA joined the UDF because it wanted to actively participate in "national development," and he claimed he has received no "material benefits" from the alliance. President Bingu wa Mutharika was notably absent from the press conference.

UDF'S MAJORITY IN PARLIAMENT

3. (SBU) With the NDA's 8 seats in Parliament, the UDF has the support of 105 parliamentarians, 8 more than the simple majority required to pass legislation in the 193 member house. Thanks to Muluzi's politicking, the UDF's majority is supported by 6 different political parties and 22 independent MPs.

4. (SBU) UDF Spokesperson Ken Lipenga told the media on June 20 that the UDF will support Rodwell Munyenembe, who was elected the House's first Speaker in 1994, as the party's candidate for Speaker. The Malawi Congress Party (MCP), leading opposition party with 57 parliamentary seats, has said its candidate will be Louis Chimango. (COMMENT: After Munyenembe lost his parliamentary seat in 1999, he defected from the Alliance for Democracy to the UDF. Since then, he has been a Muluzi loyalist, serving in high-ranking cabinet positions throughout Muluzi's second term, most recently as Minister of Defense. END COMMENT.)

FIRST SESSION OF THE HOUSE

5. (SBU) Clerk of Parliament Roosevelt Gondwe told polfsn the election of the Speaker and Deputies will take place the morning of June 28. The President will officially open the session with an address on the morning of June 29. A constitutionally-mandated 5 days of debate on the President's comments will follow. The House will then begin regular business.

COMMENT

6. (SBU) With the conclusion of an alliance with once arch-enemy Brown Mpinganjira and the NDA after earlier cementing an alliance with Gwanda Chakuamba and his Republic Party, Muluzi and the UDF have effectively trumped the opposition. Several parties that vowed never to work together have aligned themselves with the UDF, and Muluzi is clearly the kingpin. With Mutharika dependent on a working majority in Parliament, Muluzi has increased his influence over Mutharika. END COMMENT.
DOUGHERTY